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Tribal Law Enforcement

Blackfeet Reservation	(406) 338-4000
Crow Reservation	(406) 638-2957
Flathead Reservation	(406) 675-4700
Fort Belknap Reservation	(406) 353-2933
Fort Peck Reservation	(406) 768-5565
N. Cheyenne Reservation	(406) 477-8249
Rocky Boy's Reservation	(406) 395-4184
Little Shell Tribe	(406) 315-2400*

*Little Shell Tribe Historic Preservation Office

This information will be made available in alternate
formats upon request by calling (406) 444-3310.



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Updated: 10/25/2018

STATE OF MONTANA

A Guide for Coroners, Local Law Enforcement, & Property Owners

**WHAT TO DO
WHEN A BURIAL
SITE OR HUMAN
SKELETAL
REMAINS ARE
FOUND ON
STATE OR
PRIVATE LANDS
IN MONTANA**

If Native or Non-Native Human Remains or Burial Site are Discovered

1. Cease all activity at the site and immediately call the County Coroner.
2. The Coroner may seize the remains if a criminal inquiry or inquest is warranted.
3. If the Coroner determines a coroner's inquiry or inquest is not warranted, the Coroner shall call the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), Stan Wilmoth, at (406) 444-7719 within 24 hours. If SHPO cannot be contacted, the Coroner will call the nearest member of the State Burial Preservation Board or law enforcement at the nearest Indian reservation.
4. Unless there is suspicion of a crime scene or the Board has made another finding, **burial sites and human remains must be protected and preserved in place regardless of ethnic origin, burial context, or age of burial site.**
5. All burial sites must be avoided (not physically disturbed) as a matter of law. Montana Code Annotated, Title 46, Chapter 4 (authority of coroners) does not authorize removal of remains solely for documentation of ethnicity or age or other study. **Removal or disturbance of human remains other than in a coroner's inquiry/inquest should occur only after other alternatives (primarily preservation in place) have been considered by the Board.**

HUMAN SKELETAL REMAINS AND BURIAL SITE PROTECTION ACT PROCEDURES

22-3-801 through 22-3-811, MCA

STEP 1

Discovery on state or private land of human remains, burial site, or burial material - **DO NOT DISTURB THE SITE**, contact County Coroner, 22-3-805(1), MCA

Discovery on Federal land of human remains, burial site, or burial material - **NO STATE JURISDICTION**
Call NAGPRA (202) 354-2201 or visit <http://www.nps.gov/history/nagpra/INDEX.HTM>

STEP 2

After notification, Coroner has 2 working days to determine if crime site and whether or not Title 46, MCA, applies, 22-3-805(2), MCA

If a crime scene - Coroner may seize remains as evidence for criminal proceeding, 22-3-805(3), MCA

If more than 2 working days are needed to make a determination, Coroner notifies Board member about length of delay, 22-3-805(2), MCA

STEP 3

If not a crime scene and no forensic examination is necessary, the site is not to be disturbed and the Coroner contacts SHPO within 24 hours (406) 444-7715, 22-3-805(4), MCA

If SHPO cannot be contacted, Coroner notifies Board member or law enforcement agency of nearest reservation within 24 hours, 22-3-805(5), MCA

STEP 4

Upon Coroner contact, SHPO has 1 day to contact (a) Landowner and the Board; or (b) Landowner and the Board member representing nearest reservation, 22-3-805(4), MCA

Board or law enforcement agency immediately notifies landowner and Board member representing nearest reservation, 22-3-805(5), MCA

STEP 5

Board has 36 hours after notification to designate representative to conduct (with landowner permission) an initial field review, 22-3-805(6), MCA

If no resolution is achieved among Board representatives and the landowner within 40 days after Board notification, remains must be removed and control vested with the Board. Board gives control to descendants, tribe, or group most closely affiliated or with aboriginal or historic occupation of area, 22-3-805(7), MCA

STEP 6

Board's representative and landowner agree to disposition/resolution, 22-3-805(6), MCA

A person may be assessed criminal and civil penalties for prohibited acts specified in the Human Skeletal Remains and Burial Site Protection Act. 22-3-808, MCA.